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PVN-Op 098-Excavation Report

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Operation 98

Site 98 is located about 1km north of La Sierra and consists of at least 15 structures arranged around two plazas. The three concentrations of rocks noted on the surface point to the former existence of as many additional buildings within this settlement. Overall, Site 98 covers about 3,500m². When first recorded in 1988, Site 98 was blanketed in low grass, the field in which it was situated having been used as cattle pasture. On a return visit to the site in 1996 the tract containing the settlement was devoted to sorghum cultivation, the structures having suffered moderate damage due to plowing and the construction of a dirt access road through the site. Excavations were conducted on three structures (Strs. 3, 8, and 13) during April 18-30, 1988. In addition, one test trench measuring 1x2m was dug south of Str. 13 on the settlement's west side. In all, 71m² was cleared in the course of this work, the investigations being overseen by P. Reed and P. Whooley.

Structure 3

Structure 3 is located on the east side of Op. 98, lying 39m east of Str. 13. Digging here was conducted in Subop. 98C, a 1m-wide (north-south) by 11m long (east-west; 11m² cleared) trench that cut across the full width of Str. 3. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.62m and 0.6m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. One construction phase was identified in the course of these investigations that were directed by P. Whooley from April 18-30, 1988.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.2, 3	-	
2	Str. 3-1 st	U.1-5	-	-	
3	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity revealed in Subop. 98D was the deposition of S.3. Unfortunately, records describing this soil, which was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.17m off Str. 3-1st's east side, were lost. Covering S.3 by 0.22-0.33m is a light brown, soft-compacted soil (S.2). Stratum 2 ascends 0.09m over 2.8m east-to west before running more-or-less flat for 7.4m westward under Str. 3-1st.

Time Span 2

Structure 3-1st is fronted by stone facings that stand 0.5m (U.4) and 0.3m (U.1) tall on the east and west, respectively. These retaining walls contain a fill composed of a moderately dense concentration of small to medium-size rocks set in a brown soil matrix (U.5). Unit 1 is succeeded by a 1.3m-wide level surface that terminates in a 0.1m-tall stone step-up to the summit (U.2). The summit encompasses 2.61m east-west and is defined by U.2 on the west and a 0.17m-high step-up to the summit surface on the east (U.3). There are hints that an earthen

floored enclosure measuring 1.32m east-west was set against this elevated portion of the summit on its east side. This space is delimited by U.3 on the west and the uppermost 0.17m of U.4 on the east.

In all, Str. 3-1st is a 0.4m- (east side) to 0.5m-tall (west flank), stone faced, earth-and-rock-filled platform that measures 5.61m east-west and is aligned roughly 336 degrees. Its superstructure was apparently composed of two segments the floors of which are set at different elevations. The higher portion measures 2.61m across east-west and is bordered on the east by what might have been a room that adjoins raised element and covers 1.32m east-west. The latter's earthen floor is 0.17m lower the top of the adjoining raised summit portion. No built-in furniture or other architectural features were identified in our limited clearing of the summit. All TS.2 architecture was constructed of river-worn cobbles that were set in a mud mortar.

Time Span 3

Following Str. 3-1st's abandonment the building was largely enveloped by the deposition of as much as 0.45m of a dark brown, hard-compacted soil (S.1). Embedded in S.1, mostly along its interface with S.2, is a moderately dense concentration of displaced stones that likely fell from final-phase construction (F.1). Feature 1 was followed for 2.55m east and 1.4m west of Str. 3-1st.

Structure 8

Structure 8 lies on the south side of the Op. 98 patio, ca. 30m southeast of Str. 13 and 26.5m southwest of Str. 3. Digging here in Subop. 98D was limited to a 1m-wide by 7m-long (northwest-southeast; 7m² cleared) trench that encountered Str. 8-1st's north corner. Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 1.07m and 0.5m below modern ground surface beyond and within architecture, respectively. One construction phase along with evidence of an earlier occupation were uncovered in the course of this work that was directed by P. Whooley from April 18-30, 1988.

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.2	-	
2	-	-	-	F.2	
3	-	-	S.1, 2	-	
4	Str. 8-1 st	U.1-4	-	-	
5	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Subop. 98D is the deposition of at least 0.15m of S.2. Unfortunately, the description of this earth level has been lost.

Time Span 2

It was during this interval that a 0.11m-thick layer of burnt earth (F.2) was introduced. Feature 2 was traced for 3.4m northwest from what appears to have been its southeastern terminus; the northwest end was not identified. Feature 2 contains numerous fissures that divide its burnt earth into segments that measure 0.2-0.5m long. There is no doubt that F.2 is the result of purposeful human action though its behavioral significance is unclear. We tentatively infer that F.2 represents the remains of a living surface that was hardened through burning. There were no signs of any structure that might have been raised on or around this putative floor.

Time Span 3

Following the conclusion of TS.2 approximately 0.5m of S.2 was laid down. Stratum 2's upper surface rises 0.14m over 4.37m from northwest-to-southeast. Approximately 0.1m of S.1 was deposited atop S.2 before construction on Str. 8-1st began. Once again, details concerning the composition of S.1 are missing from project records.

Time Span 4

Structure 8-1st is fronted on the northwest by a 0.36m-high stone terrace (U.1). Unit 1 measures 0.7m across northwest-southeast and is succeeded on the southeast by a 0.34m-high ascent (U.2). Unit 2 seems to have provided access to the earthen-floored summit where what may have been the poorly preserved remnant of a stone foundation (U.3) was located 0.4-1.7m southeast of U.2. Unit 3 is 0.15m tall by 0.38m wide and runs at an azimuth of ca. 96 degrees. Unit 3's alignment diverges from the overall orientation of the building which is roughly 15 degrees. This distinction may result from U.3's poor state of preservation which made measuring its orientation difficult. The fill contained by U.1 and 2 consists of a moderately dense concentration of medium-size cobbles set in a brown soil (U.4).

Structure 8-1st is a 0.7m-high stone-faced, stone-and-earth-filled platform that is aligned approximately 15 degrees. The building's northwest flank is fronted by a 0.36m-tall stone-faced terrace that is 0.7m wide. Rising above this unit's southeast side is a 0.34m-high step-up to the summit. The small segment of the latter that was exposed in Subop. 98D was apparently surfaced with earth and may have supported at least one room. The barely discernible northeast foundation of the putative enclosure stood an estimated 0.15m high and measured 0.38m across. All TS.4 construction consists of cobbles the flatter aspects of which are directed outwards. The stones are set in a mud mortar.

Time Span 5

After Str. 8-1st was abandoned it was largely blanketed by the continued deposition of as much as 0.4m of S.1. Embedded in S.1 is a moderately dense concentration of rocks that were likely displaced from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 was traced for 1.3m northwest of Str. 8-1st.

Structure 13

Structure 13 occupies the west side of the Operation 98 patio. It is located 39m west of Structure 3. Excavations here within Suboperations 98A and B revealed limited portions of the platform's north and east sides along with a fragment of the summit's east side. In all, these two trenches cut across Structure 98's full north-south width and exposed ca. 51m², digging being pursued to maximum depths of 1.8m and 0.6m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. One major construction period was identified in the course of this work which was supervised by P. Reed and P. Whooley for 10 days during the 1988 field season.

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.1-2	-	
2	Str. 13-1 st Str 13-Sub1 Str. 13-Sub2 Str. 13-Sub3	U.1, 3-5, U.8-9 U.2 U.6-7	-	F.2	
3	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Subop. 98A and B was the deposition of a hard-compacted light brown soil (S.2). Stratum 2 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 1.37m at a point 4.6m north of Str. 13-1st. The great many artifacts recovered from S.2 points to a significant occupation in the immediate area while this soil was being laid down. Approximately 0.2m of S.1, a hard-compacted, dark brown earth may have accumulated atop S.2 during TS.1. This inference is based the observation that this much of S.1 intervened between the top of S.2 and the base of TS.2 architecture. There is no hint of a hiatus in the occupation of Operation 98 during the deposition of lower S.1 as this portion of the stratum contains significant quantities of artifacts.

Time Span 2

Structure 13-1st is bordered on the north by a stone-faced terrace (U.1) that stands 0.7m tall and is oriented 108 degrees, 30 minutes. Unit 1 is backed on the south by a fill composed of a moderately dense concentration of rocks set in a dark brown soil matrix (U.3). The base of U.3 rises approximately 0.4m over the 3.41m it was exposed running north-to-south. The level surface created by U.1's erection supports two constructions (Str. 13-Sub1 and 13-Sub2). Structure 13-1st is fronted on the south by a 0.33m-tall stone facing (U.4). Unit 4's construction suggests that the ground over which the Str. 13-1st complex was raised was uneven, ascending north-to-south (as suggested by the disposition of the U.3 fill) before dropping again to the south. The fill backing U.4 to the north consists of a moderately dense concentration of rocks

set in a dark brown soil matrix (U.5). Fully 3.7m of Str. 13-1st's south side was exposed, U.4 apparently stepping back 0.2m northward at a point about 1.8m west of the wall's southeast corner. Both the southeast and southwest corners of Str. 13-1st were at least tentatively identified in our excavations.

Very little is known about the constructions raised between U.1 and 4. This area, covering 8.8m north-south, may have been at least partially paved with a mix of stones and earth (F.2). Units 8 and 9, located about 0.8m north of U.4 are the east and north (respectively) foundations for a room (Str. 13-Sub1) that was completely open to the south. These footings are 0.19m tall and define an earthen-floored interior space measuring 1.4m north-south by at least 1.8m east west (the enclosure's western limits were not revealed). Unit 2, a 0.11m-tall stone wall located 1.5m south of U.1, projected 0.5m west from Subop. 98A's eastern trench wall. This construction may be part of a stone foundation that defined the north side of a room (Str. 13-Sub2) raised atop the surface backing U.1 to the south. That U.2 did not extend across the full 1m width (east-west) of Subop. 98A tentatively implies that it marks the east side of a door leading into Str. 13-Sub2.

Lying 1m south of Str. 13-1st are the remains of Str. 13-Sub3. This building was bordered by 0.47m-tall walls on the north (U. 7) and west (U.6). The north facing (U.7) was traced for 3.6m east from its northwest corner with U.6 at which point the wall steps northward 0.1m before continuing for an additional 0.7m to the east. We did not follow U.7 to its eastern terminus. Unit 6 was traced for 2m south from the platform's northwest corner at which point we could no longer identify remnants of this wall. If U.6's termination on the south is not due to its destruction following the building's abandonment, then its abrupt ending may signal a doorway providing access to Str. 13-Sub3's interior. At present we cannot be sure that this was the case. If Str.13-Sub3 is a surface-level building then its interior measures at least 2.3m north-south by minimally 4.5m east-west (the southern and eastern sides of the edifice were not uncovered).

Overall, Str. 13-1st consists of a complex of rooms built atop a platform that measures 8.8m across north-south. This edifice is fronted on the north by a 0.7m-high stone facing (U.1) that is oriented ca. 108 degrees, 30 minutes. This construction apparently slowed erosion down what appears to have been a south-to-north descent. The area backing U.1 to the south may have been at least partially surfaced with a mix of rocks and earth. Unit 4 apparently defines the south margin of Str. 13-1st and measures 3.7m along an azimuth of roughly 99 degrees, 45 minutes. Unit 4's southeast and southwest corners were tentatively identified. The erection of U.4 suggests that the ground on which Str. 13-1st was raised may have been dropping gradually to the south, requiring the erection of this wall to preserve a flat space on which Str. 13-Sub1 and 13-Sub2 could be built. Structure 13-Sub1 lies 6.3m south of U.1 and consists of an earthen-floored room bounded by stone foundations (U.8 and 9) that are 0.19m tall. This enclosure is aligned approximately 105 degrees and its interior covers at least 2.5m². It is open to the south where it overlooks Unit 4. Structure 13-Sub2 is represented by a small (0.5m-long) fragment of its apparent northern foundation (U.2). Unit 2 is 0.11m high and may form the east side of a door that looked north over U.1, ca. 1.5m to the north. Structure 13-Sub3 seems to have been a surface-level building delimited by substantial stone walls standing 0.47m tall on at least the north and west. This edifice was possibly entered through a door in its west side, the building's interior encompassing at least 10m². Overall, Str. 13-Sub3 measured at least 2.3x4.5m and was oriented about 105 degrees. All constructions raised during TS.2 consist of river-worn stones set in a mud mortar. The flatter aspects of these rocks were generally oriented outwards.

Time Span 3

Following Str. 13-1st's abandonment most TS.2 architecture was covered by the continued deposition of S.1. Embedded in upper S.1 and extending for 2.1m north of U.1 is a moderately dense concentration of rocks (F.1) that likely fell from final-phase architecture.

Test Pit

Suboperation 98E is a 1x2m trench (2m² cleared) that is oriented roughly 343 degrees and located 9m southeast of Str. 13 on the patio's west side. This trench was dug to investigate a portion of the settlement that lacked surface-visible architecture. Digging here was pursued to a maximum depth of 1m below modern ground surface. No architecture was recovered though a dense concentration of artifacts was encountered, mostly in the uppermost 0.5m of the excavation. All work in Subop. 98E was overseen by P. Reed, the investigations encompassing two days during the 1988 field season.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.2	-	
2	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

The first activity identified in Subop. 98E was the deposition of a light brown, softly compacted soil (S.2). Stratum 2 was encountered at 0.5m below modern ground surface and was at least 0.5m thick; its base was not encountered. The presence of artifacts (422 items/m³) in S.2 suggests that there was a substantial human presence when it was laid down.

Time Span 2

Stratum 2 was subsequently covered by 0.5m of a hard-compacted, dark brown soil (S.1). Excavations in the northern 1m² of Subop. 98E within S.1 revealed a dense concentration of artifacts, mostly pottery sherds (F.1; 857 items/m³). This collection, in addition to pottery sherds, includes 4 *incensario* fragments, 3 pieces of obsidian, 1 *candelero* fragment, two figurine pieces, a bone fragment, along with 10 pieces of *bajareque*. The density of materials found in this 1m² area combined with the deposit's composition suggests that it was part of a trash deposit. Digging immediately south of F.1 yielded reduced amounts of cultural materials (405 items/m³) suggesting that the trash deposit did not extend much further in this direction. Most likely F.1 consists of debris jettisoned near the end of Op.98's occupation.